

Five Unwritten Tales by Luddleston

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Summary:

Hawke remembered a time before he'd known Varric was a writer.

Back then, he hadn't understood the meaning of the peculiar, inquisitive tilt of Varric's head and the glittering focus of his eyes and the slow movement of his hands over his jaw where any sensible dwarf would have a beard. He'd thought Varric was just watchful, observant for the sake of being so.

Now, he knew Varric was taking *notes*.

Five stories Varric never wrote, and one story he did.

Five Unwritten Tales

Author's Note:

Hawke and Varric love each other on a level no one will ever understand probably.

Hawke remembered a time before he'd known Varric was a writer. It had been a while before he learned of his friend's literary pursuits—Hawke wasn't much of a reader, you see, being too busy fighting to escape the Blight and then fighting to get into Kirkwall and then fighting not to get squashed by Kirkwall.

He doubted he'd have ever picked up a book called *'Hard in Hightown'* long enough to notice the author's name, anyhow.

Back then, he hadn't understood the meaning of the peculiar, inquisitive tilt of Varric's head and the glittering focus of his eyes and the slow movement of his hands over his jaw where any sensible dwarf would have a beard. He'd thought Varric was just watchful, observant for the sake of being so.

Now, he knew Varric was taking *notes*.

He had that look to him when Hawke blew into the Hanged Man one afternoon, back from Sundermount with a new understanding of what spiders smelled like. He was still picking bristles out of his hair and his armor and he didn't think he'd *ever* stop itching like there were little spider feet crawling all over him. That's what they don't tell you about giant spiders—there were dozens of small ones for every giant one. Eugh.

"So, how'd it go?" Varric asked, grinning ear to fucking ear, sitting with his feet kicked up.

"Terribly," Fenris answered on Hawke's behalf, dropping into the last chair before Hawke could get to it. Hawke was busy stripping off his armor and any outer layers that might have spider-bristles all over them, swearing to the Maker and his bride that some little spiders were still scuttling about in

there. "Please include in your manuscript that fighting spiders with Hawke is awful, because he occasionally closes his eyes and launches a fireball."

"I *said* I was sorry." Hawke shook his duster in the direction of the fire just in case. Wouldn't do to infest Varric's suite with creepy-crawlies, especially because Hawke *liked* spending time here. "And Anders healed it, anyhow."

"You hit *Fenris* with a fireball?" Varric said, setting the deck of cards he'd been shuffling on the table before him.

Isabela was laughing her ass off, and Merrill looked quite shocked, peering at Fenris as if expecting to see burn scars.

"He did," Fenris said. "Aveline can attest. Get me a drink, at least, Hawke."

"*Grazed*," Hawke said. "I *lightly grazed* you with a fireball, and Anders healed it straightaway!"

He poured from the pitcher of ale Varric had on the table and slid the cup to Fenris, who gave an appreciative hum as he drank. "It's alright," Fenris said. "He received divine comeuppance. Having his eyes closed meant he didn't see one of those big bastards sneaking up behind him, and it tackled him—pinned him to the ground like a misbehaving mabari, although instead of licking him, it tried to eat him."

Hawke shuddered, feeling a little nauseated just thinking about it. "I hate them. Terrible beasts. Worse than darkspawn."

"He shrieked like a little girl," Fenris said, in the same flat tone, although the pull at the corner of his mouth said he was unduly amused. "Poor thing."

"*Don't* write that," Hawke said. Given that they were out of chairs and Hawke felt dead on his feet, it was either the table or somebody's lap. He plopped onto Varric's knee. "I'm serious, Varric, it was unbecoming."

"None of you have any say on what I do or do not write," Varric informed him. He did put an arm around Hawke's waist to keep him from sliding

away, so that was nice. "But all heroes should have flaws. A fear of spiders is even a sensible one. They could be... *anywhere*."

His fingers crept over Hawke's hip in a wiggling mimicry of a spider's legs, and Hawke, who honestly thought he'd no adrenaline left in him at that point, shot up and smacked at what his gut interpreted as yet another horrid little arachnid. It was, in fact, just Varric.

"*Maker*. Don't do that to me," he breathed, dusting off his trousers just in case.

"Don't pout," Varric replied. He hooked his fingers through Hawke's belt and tugged, bringing him back into his seat, more fully on Varric's lap this time instead of perched on his knee. "We'll get you a drink, and then you can forget *all about* how two handsome boys saw you scream like a baby over a big, bad spider."

Trust Varric to get right to the heart of the matter.

"Aveline was also a witness," Hawke said.

"Yeah. But you don't care about looking like a big, sexy badass in front of Aveline."

"Oh, Varric," Hawke said, dripping seduction, "you *know* I only care about that when *you're* around."

"Save the eyelash-batting for Broody and Blondie, will you?" Varric instructed.

"*Varric*," Isabela said, slamming a fist down on the table and making all the drinks and the deck of cards rattle. "Stop flirting with Hawke and *deal* if you're going to play."

Varric shook his head and gathered up the cards Isabela had scattered. "All right, Rivaini. Patience."

"You know, I'd tell you to keep your pants on, Isabela," Hawke said, "but that's never really worked on you."

“Am I dealing you in, or not, Hawke?” Varric asked.

“Fine,” he sighed. “Fenris deserves to win some of my coin, probably.”

— — —

Hawke’s ears felt like they were full of cotton, but that didn’t stop the sound of a quill pen scratching over parchment from reaching them. It was a nice sound, soothing, even. A smooth rhythm of marks on a page, like the writer knew exactly what he wanted to say and didn’t falter for a second.

That’s how Hawke knew it was Varric.

The writing did stop when Hawke groaned.

“He lives,” Varric said, soft enough that it was clear he wasn’t announcing to the room at large, just talking to Hawke. Or talking to himself.

Hawke’s head felt like an overripe melon, about to burst at the seams. He sneezed three times in quick succession (which made the splitting headache worse) then said, “you had better not be writing shit for your book about the sorry state I’m—” and then was cut off by an unavoidable coughing fit.

“Come now, do you really think I’m that much of a bastard?” Varric picked up a mug from the side table and handed it to him. It was water flavored with honey and lemon, and maybe had been warm when somebody brought it in, but wasn’t anymore. “I can’t believe you, first coherent thing you say in two days and it’s accusing me.” He laid the back of his hand on Hawke’s forehead for just a second, then pushed his hair out of his face. It was so brief, it took Hawke a long moment to realize Varric had been checking on his fever.

And then he realized the other thing.

“Two *days*?”

“Two and a half, now,” Varric said. “Why, what’d it feel like?”

"It *felt* like an eternity, but I was hoping it was only a few hours," Hawke said, remembering bits and flashes of the absolutely vile flu he'd come down with. *Maker's breath*, he'd fainted a little bit in the middle of Lowtown, hadn't he? He definitely remembered leaning on Aveline's shoulder while they walked somewhere, with Anders berating him for telling them over and over again that he was 'probably just allergic to Kirkwall air' and was totally fine. "Shit—Mother wanted me to help with moving in all the new furniture."

"Done," Varric said. "Aveline rounded up a few new recruits for the guards. They'll do whatever she says to kiss her ass."

"My meeting with the viscount—"

"I smoothed that over. He sent his best wishes and a bunch of flowers."

"I was supposed to help Merrill rescue the kittens that are hiding in her gutter!"

"Anders got it. He loves cats, apparently so much so that he's willing to spend time with a blood mage. He's visiting again next week to check up on them." Varric pressed a hand to the middle of Hawke's chest, urging him to lean back against the mountain of pillows piled up at the head of his bed. "Just relax. Everything's under control, the world's not falling apart without you."

"No, it seems my endearingly competent friends have everything on my schedule handled. Why don't you ever help this much when I'm not terribly ill?" As if called by the sound of his voice, Hawke's mabari jumped onto the bed and turned a few happy circles before curling up next to his legs.

"Because you never let anyone handle anything you could do yourself?"

Hawke pulled his blankets to his chin. "It's a little scary how you see right through me like that."

"I'm your best friend," Varric said. "It's what I do."

"You are," Hawke said, feeling sleepy and drifty again. "The best of friends. *Maker*, what was in that potion Anders gave me?"

"Oh, so you *do* remember some of the past couple days. I don't know, honestly, but it's helped. You stopped looking so gray after he gave it to you." Varric picked up the journal he'd been working on again, but didn't start writing, just ran his fingers along the edges over the cover. "Hawke—next time you're sick, just tell somebody you're sick."

"Never," Hawke said, just to be contrary.

"*Garrett.*"

Oh, shit. Hawke had never actually heard his given name from him before. Wait, no. There had been one other time—in the Deep Roads, when they all thought they were going to die.

"I'll tell somebody," he said. "I promise."

"Good. Think you can get some food down?" Varric asked him.

"Let's not push it," Hawke said, his stomach displeased at the idea.

Hawke drank his honey-lemon-water, and Varric kept writing, just as confident, just as even, only pausing to re-ink his pen.

— — —

The music from the taproom of the Hanged Man was maudlin tonight. That's what went and put Hawke in this mood.

That, the Ferelden whiskey he and Varric were drinking. It tasted like *home*, like the stuff his father used to keep in the cupboard and pour himself a glass on special occasions. When Garrett became a man, his father used to pour them both one, and when Carver became a man, there were three glasses. Carver thought it tasted terrible, but he drank it anyhow, because he wanted to be like his father and his big brother no matter the cost.

No matter the cost.

He turned the glass in his hand, looking at the liquid filtered through firelight. Same color as Varric's eyes.

"See, this is why I smoke a pipe," Hawke said, after a long silence. "Whiskey makes me introspective, and introspection makes me sad."

"You don't seem sad, just quiet," Varric said, putting his feet up on the same stool Hawke's were resting on. There wasn't really enough room, so Varric just put his feet up on Hawke's shins.

"I put a great deal of effort into not seeming sad."

This was not something he would have admitted sober.

"I think we both do." Varric, perhaps, would not have admitted this sober, either. "Two of a pair, you and I."

"I heard from the Wardens today," Hawke said.

It was a testament to Varric's cool head that he didn't immediately jerk to attention. He just looked at Hawke and said, "and?"

"Carver's alive."

Varric blew out a long breath that belied worries that had been on his chest. "Damn. Good. We should be *celebrating*, then, why're you moping?"

"Because," Hawke said, turning the glass in his hands again, watching the fire glint off the engravings in it. The clean, geometric patterns reminded him of Varric's rug. Dwarven made, though doubtless the glasses came from the surface, "I'm up here, making a name for myself, spending the fortune we found down there, living in a big fancy house with a *library* and a *wine cellar* and a portrait of Grandfather Amell, and Carver is in the Deep Roads fighting Darkspawn still."

Varric didn't answer, but his silence was just as effective at pressing Hawke to go on.

"He fought just as hard as any of us down there. Suffered more than most of us. Would have... would have died, if it wasn't for Anders." His voice was choked, and he took a drink in hopes that it would clear his throat. "He deserves to be enjoying the victory like the rest of us."

"And Bartrand deserves to be rotting down there, but he's rich as a king and off living it up somewhere."

Hawke laughed, but it sounded hollow out of his chest. "How's that for dramatic irony?"

"That's not what 'dramatic irony' means," Varric said, nudging Hawke in the calf with the heel of his boot.

"Oh?"

"Dramatic irony," Varric sighed, "is when you're reading a book—or watching a play—and you, as the audience, know something the character doesn't. So you're stuck there wondering how they're going to figure it out, *when* they're going to figure it out, and if it's gonna be too late."

Hawke hummed, leaning on the arm of his chair to get a closer look at Varric. "And when you write our story, what sort of dramatic irony is going in there?"

"I dunno, really," Varric said. "To be honest, the first draft, it's not the time for grand storytelling devices. But maybe I'll make sure they know Bartrand's going to fuck us over, so that door scraping closed behind us isn't a surprise, just a gut-slugging inevitability."

Hawke poured them both another drink. "In hindsight, Bartrand was obviously a bastard—no offense to your mother."

"None taken. Maybe instead I'll describe the moment the hero's loyal younger brother gets stabbed by a Darkspawn, knows the wound is tainted, and binds it up to hide it from the rest."

"Come now, you need *some* verisimilitude. Carver's never been loyal to me in particular."

Varric crossed one leg over the other at the ankles. "I think you'll find he is," he said. "Listen, you've got no experience being a younger brother."

"Can't be that bad," Hawke said, "being the oldest sister is the worst."

"Yes, okay, I believe you, but that isn't the point." Varric knocked back the rest of his glass with a sharp tip of his head. "The point is, Junior would follow you into the Void itself, and so he never would've forgiven you if you took off for the Deep Roads without him. Probably would've cursed you to your dying day. Maybe even joined the templars out of spite."

"Carver?" Hawke laughed. "He'd never get on with that much rule and order."

Varric shrugged. "You never know. Anyway, he'll write to you himself soon, yes? There's no reason to assume he's having a horrible time down there before you're sure. Maybe he's turned into some darkspawn-slaying hero like that cousin of yours."

Hawke fully believed that if anyone out there was competitive enough to give Warden-Commander-Cousin-Amell a run for her coin, it would be Carver. He sighed, tipping his head back against the back of his chair.

"It must be hard," Varric said, giving Hawke an analytical stare. "Knowing you can't protect him."

"Maker," Hawke sighed, pinching his brow. "It is. Is it the same for you, with Bartrand? Knowing you can't pull the strings, keep him from getting into real trouble?"

"I probably would've felt that way if he actually made it seem like an accident. You know, the leaving us for dead. Carver would never do that. Probably."

"*Probably.*" Hawke lifted his glass as if to say, '*cheers to that.*'

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Injuries, up to and including near-deadly ones, were common in Kirkwall, where every dark alley was the perfect spot for a knife fight. Hawke wasn't an accomplished healer (Bethany was always better) but on more than one occasion, he'd sewn up gashes with magic, particularly for those of his cadre who were more prone to violent altercations and less prone to carrying around potions or wearing sufficient armor to protect themselves.

So, mostly Isabela and Fenris. (Anders was excluded from that list only because he could heal himself.)

Varric was not often included in that number because he was sneaky, fought from a distance, and was much better at dodging. Compared to Hawke, who stuck out like a six-foot sore thumb in a lot of black leather armor with a shiny golden staff, Varric sank into the background easily.

The Coterie was up to their usual nightly business, territorial as a rangy old barn cat, if that cat shot crossbow bolts at anyone who happened to walk past. Their marksman's aim was *terrible*, because they had no Bianca on their side, and Hawke barked a laugh as a bolt that was meant to hit him in the gut whizzed right past, missing him by a wide margin.

He unleashed a fireball that burned up the next bolt and sent the bastard who'd fired it scattering, scanning for stragglers and grinning when they wisely left him alone. "Did you see that?" he asked over his shoulder. "What sort of poor idiots are they hiring off the streets these days? They could at least teach them to shoot straight before they hand them a crossbow and say 'go at it'."

He didn't get the usual chuckle and rejoinder from Varric, because the bolt, while poorly aimed to hit Hawke in the gut, had landed.

"*Fuck*. Varric, are you—?" he wasn't sure if he was going to end that sentence with 'alright' or 'dead'. This was bad. This wasn't like one of those times Varric took a templar's boot to the torso and got the wind knocked out of him, only to get up moments later giving himself notes on learning to parry, with love from his innards.

For a second, Hawke thought the bolt was in his chest. There was a lot of blood, and it was on his left side—dwarves had their hearts on the left side too, right? Hawke suddenly doubted this, despite the number of Carta thugs he'd killed.

But then Varric groaned, and shifted, and just the slightest change in the surrounding torchlight let Hawke see that the bolt was through his shoulder, not his chest. Better, but still bad.

Hawke dropped to his knees beside him, hand on his uninjured shoulder. "Varric." Hawke wasn't a good enough healer for this. He didn't know how deep it went, what the angle was, if it had hit something important in there. Closing surface wounds wasn't going to staunch internal bleeding. There was still *too much blood*. "We have to get you to Anders."

"...Always knew I'd end up shot in an alleyway sometime," Varric said, his voice unsteady.

Hawke scooped him into his arms, figuring Varric could (and would) complain about the indignity of it later. He threw Bianca over his shoulder, where the crossbow clattered against his staff. "You'll be fine," he said, his usual humor lost in the tightness of his voice and the panic thumping through his chest.

"If I'm not..." Varric said, which Hawke could not abide.

"You will be."

"If I'm *not*—"

"Varric."

"Just give Bianca my love, will you?"

Only *Varric* would joke at a time like this. Actually, were Hawke the injured one, he'd probably joke too. '*At least I got out of that fancy dinner with whatever noblewoman Mother's trying to set me up with,*' or something.

"Bianca's right here, I wouldn't leave her behind," Hawke said.

Varric muttered, "not *that* Bianca," before he passed out.

Getting to Darktown and to Anders was a blur. Garrett only realized after Varric had been fixed up that he had no idea what he'd have done if Anders wasn't in.

Anders knelt beside Hawke now, and that was how Hawke knew Varric was just fine. Anders would never give Hawke attention if there was a patient who needed it.

"You're a bit of a mess, there," Anders told him, giving him a damp rag and a small bucket of water that was only slightly brown. "He'll wake up soon and he'll want to see you—best if you're not covered in *his blood* when he does. I find that dampens patients' morale."

"You don't say," Hawke said weakly, scrubbing at his hands. His jacket was a loss until it could be laundered, but thankfully Orana said she was *very good* at removing bloodstains. Sort of concerning, but helpful. "Is he alright?"

"He'll be fine," Anders said. "Back on his feet by tomorrow, although I'm sure if he tries to wield *that* contraption—" a pointed look at Bianca, which was sitting innocently on the bench beside Hawke, "—his shoulder will protest. He might even tear something anew, so don't let him."

Hawke wanted to joke, '*and just why am I in charge of him?*' but he knew the answer already and Anders was almost never in a joking mood while he was working. "I'll keep an eye on him," he said instead.

Once his hands were relatively clean, he ducked behind the curtain and into the partitioned area where Varric was laid out on a cot, no bandages on his wound, which was closed and healed, only a pink nick left behind.

Varric looked pale and sweaty like any injured man looked pale and sweaty, but it was especially incongruous on him. Hawke sat beside the cot rather than on the edge of it, because he didn't know if the cots in Anders' clinic

would actually hold the weight of two people. He put his back to it, leaning his head against the edge of the flat mattress.

"You have a bloodstain right across your nose," Varric told him.

"What? I thought I got everything," Hawke said, scrubbing at his face and then looking at his hand. Nothing was there. "Wait."

"Ha. Got you."

"That's not even funny. That's the bottom of the barrel of humor," Hawke said. He leaned his head back, and felt Varric's hand pat him, then his fingers sink into his hair.

"I can't even see your face from here, why did you believe me?" His voice was creaky, but bright.

Hawke grumbled a little. His hair was all sweaty and clumped together, but Varric didn't stop petting him, just like Hawke still pet his mabari even when he was covered in muck.

"Varric," he said eventually, "when you were all... bleeding and delirious, you told me to give Bianca your love."

He didn't put it like a question, and Varric didn't answer it. Most of the time, Varric would talk if you gave him an in-road, whether or not it was a query, but today... nothing.

"I am assuming you didn't mean your crossbow."

"You know, Hawke, there's a reason I don't usually write romances. Isabela got me going with the whole guardswoman story—I'm calling it Sword & Shields, by the way—but on the whole, I ignore those."

"Are you going to tell me this reason?" Hawke asked, looking to the side and realizing he couldn't see Varric's face at all, just the curve of his shoulder and the messy ends of his hair.

"Do you want to hear why I never tell the story about Bianca, in particular? I'm feeling introspective, thought you might be interested." It was light in a way that was purposeful, but it didn't completely disguise the weariness in his voice.

"Of course I am," Hawke said, still not sure whether Varric was going to tell him the truth, or an elaborate fable.

"You asked for it, then," Varric said, the humor not quite melding into his normal tone the way it ought to. "There's a couple reasons it's the one story I'll never tell. First off, nobody would read a romance about dwarves."

"I don't see why not. You wear your shirt wide open enough to be a romance-novel hero," Hawke said. "Chest hair blowing in the wind—I can see it now."

"Stop that, Hawke. Don't interrupt me unless you want me to get absolutely nowhere with this. Anyway, nobody would read a romance about dwarves. But other than that, this story's got all the usuals: two feuding families, a young man from one of them falling in love with a young lady from another.

"If it were a good story, the kind people would want to read, those two crazy kids would run off together, escape the villains of the Merchant Guild who want to keep them apart, and the last scene would be the two of them kissing on an Antivan beach as the sun sets."

"I take it things didn't go that way," Hawke chanced another interruption.

Varric sighed, the end turning into a grumble. "No. She's married and I have an *excellent* crossbow and several letters tucked between the pages of the most boring volumes on my bookshelf."

"But you still wanted me to give her your love, when you thought you might not be alright."

He still hadn't stopped petting Hawke's hair. "Yeah, I guess I did. But only because I didn't have to send anybody to give *you* my dying words. You

were right there."

"Always will be," Hawke said, surprised how easily it slipped out. Not surprised that he meant it.

"For what it's worth," Varric said, patting the side of Hawke's hand. "If you hadn't been there, I think you'd be the one I'd tell whatever poor soul watched over my fallen form to give my love to."

Hawke reached up and caught his hand, gave it a squeeze before letting go. "You'd best be glad I was there. Nobody else could carry you that easily."

"Aveline could."

"Okay, Aveline could."

— — —

"This really is quite brilliant," Hawke said, leaning back against Varric's pillows and stretching out his legs as he peered over the piece of absolutely *filthy* fiction that Isabela had penned, *supposedly* an effort to inspire Varric toward the culmination of Swords & Shields.

It was *actually* just a terribly smutty story about Aveline and her new beau, a man that Hawke liked (Donnic was quite even-keeled and put up with a great deal of shenanigans) but was prepared to hate if things went bad. That was how it had to be, when his friends entered romantic relationships. If he couldn't give an '*I know how to make a body disappear*' talk to any boys eyeing Bethany up, he'd at least give the same courtesy to Aveline.

"This is how I know you're not a literary connoisseur, Hawke," Varric said, sitting beside him with several notebooks on his lap. He took notes for his books in shorthand, but his handwriting was big and blocky enough and his notebooks were small and slim enough that he had more than a few. None of them were relegated to a single title, all just full of whatever Varric was thinking about at the time, meaning that Varric had to sort through about four of them.

"Not brilliant in any sort of 'life-changing literary experience' sense," Hawke said, "mostly brilliant in how *insane* it is. You can't tell if she's trying for flowery prose or making a joke. I mean, *I* can, but that's because I know Isabela. What do I need to do to convince her to write one of these about me?"

"You need to become charming, handsome, and sexy," Varric said.

Hawke looked at him over the pages. "Like I'm not already!?" he yelped, putting on an air of deep offense.

"I'm kidding. You're the most charming, handsomest, sexiest human I know."

"I could only dream of being as charming, handsome, and sexy as a dwarf," Hawke sighed.

Varric only shrugged. "Isabela writes that shit about Aveline because she knows it makes her squirm. You're not like that. If you were sleeping with somebody, we'd know all about it, so we wouldn't *have* to come up with ludicrous fantasies."

Hawke leaned his head back, closing his eyes, letting the pages fall to his chest. "I could be keeping my affairs from you. I could have a vast number of lovers all throughout the city. I'm a wealthy man. My mother has several women interested in marrying me. Unfortunately the only woman I'll ever have eyes for is Isabela—well, Merrill is adorable, too, except that would make Carver terribly disappointed."

"I'll believe there's a line of gentlemen outside your bedroom door when I see it, Hawke." It was a little less jovial and more curt than he expected from Varric—still witty but slightly strained.

"This isn't helping your writer's block, is it?" Hawke asked.

"Not especially."

"Would another drink be of assistance?"

That suggestion made a grin spread across Varric's face. "I think I'll need two for this thing."

They had three, actually.

Now, Hawke was laying back in Varric's lap, a pillow propped on Varric's stomach to cushion Hawke's head as he thumbed through Varric's notes to critique him on his ill-fated plans for a romance. "Listen, I'm not saying you have to get *that* descriptive, I just think the Kirkwall literary market would go for something steamy."

"Kirkwall already *has* a dozen hacks publishing subpar pornography," Varric said. "I need to do something *original*."

"What, really?" Hawke looked up, only getting a view of the underside of Varric's stubbled chin. "Maybe I ought to read more."

"Trust me, you don't wanna read that garbage." Varric reached over and plucked up the notebook Hawke wasn't reading, which had come to rest on Hawke's chest. "Just a lot of heaving bosoms and throbbing members and breathless gasping."

At least Isabela was *inventive*. "That *is* boring," Hawke said. "Here's an idea: you should have the guardsman fuck a bloke."

"He's supposed to fall in love with the *captain*."

"Yeah, but, you know, *before* the two of them fall wildly in love." Hawke rolled over, putting his chin on the pillow, and got no better view of Varric's face, which was obscured by his open notebook. "Maybe he's got a friend in the guard, a fellow comrade, somebody he fights alongside who knows him better than anybody else. And maybe he's all in a tizzy over how to win the captain's love, and he needs to just work out some of that frustration, and so this friend offers—"

"And they have one night of sordid passion that leaves him realizing why he fell for the captain in the first place?"

"Or they just have some fun and the guardsman goes about the rest of his day refreshed and satisfied, and then *she* realizes how good he looks when he's just been tumbled."

Varric chuckled, flipping the page in his notebook. "You really think there's somebody out there who doesn't just look tired and a little bit stupid after sex?"

"I'm told I look amazing after sex," Hawke said. "Only time I look better is during."

"Hm."

"Varric." Hawke propped himself up so they'd be face to face when he plucked the notebook out of Varric's hands. He set it to the side and Varric focused in on him, raising one eyebrow, probably wondering what Hawke was up to now. "Kiss me."

Varric didn't say a word. His hand, however, settled on Hawke's bicep, and squeezed.

"For research. For your book," Hawke explained, so close Varric could no doubt smell the whiskey on his breath, but it didn't matter, they'd both been drinking.

"I don't kiss people for research for my books," Varric said. "I know what it's like to kiss somebody and I extrapolate based on that, and the mindset of my characters."

Hawke pouted.

Before he could further his arguments, Varric's hand came up, clasping Hawke's chin. "I'll only kiss you if I want to."

"Do you want to?"

Varric's opposite hand fell heavy on the back of his neck. "Yeah, Hawke. I want to."

— — —

The Champion of Kirkwall was a man who loved many people, even after losing half the ones he held dear. If you're looking for sordid details or gossip to pass around, your humble narrator would like to remark that there isn't much, if only because the Champion would be far too pleased with that.

What you must understand, is that while most men love their families, their wives or other lovers, their children, the Champion, above all else, valued his friends. These were the people he pulled into his circle of influence, or who were drawn to him by the hands of fate. It may sound like a simple platitude to say that I am lucky to be among them, but anyone who knows him is aware that this is only the truth.

For all those who know Hawke, there is nothing quite like being loved by him.

Author's Note:

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